

REMARKS

Claims 1; 14; 16; 17; 18; 19; and 20 have been amended. New claims 21 to 31 have been added.

Claims 1 to 31 remain in the application.

The Examiner has rejected independent claim 16 based upon 35 U.S.C. § 112. Claim 16 has been amended to overcome this rejection. Dependent claims 17 to 20 have been amended to change their dependency in light of the renumbering of the original claims (due to the presence of two claim 13's). The Examiner also indicated that claims 17 to 20 were allowable if placed into independent form. With the amendment of independent claim 16, claim 16 and its dependent claims 17 to 20 (amended) are believed to be in condition for allowance.

The Examiner has also indicated that claims 2 to 10 and 12 to 15 would be allowable if placed in independent form. Accordingly, new claims 21 and 22 place claims 2 and 5 in independent form, respectively; new multiple dependent claims 23 and 24 are based upon dependent claims 3/6 and 4/7, respectively; and new claims 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31 place claims 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 in independent form, respectively. New claims 21 to 31 are therefore believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 1 and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. '102(b) based upon Williamson IV et al US 5,525,218. Claim 1 has been amended to define the mid-region of the umbilicus as being free of an external bearing element. Support for this amendment can be found, e.g., on page 23, lines 31-32 ("The support members ... make possible a bearing-less umbilicus assembly with no moving parts"); page 24, lines 4 to 13; and Fig. 4. The umbilicus in Williamson is not bearing-less – its mid-portion carries a pair of bushings 106 (see column 7, lines 49 to 56 and Fig. 4). There is nothing in Williamson that teaches or suggests a bearing-less umbilicus and the assembly defined in claim 1, as amended.

The applicant therefore believes that all pending claims 1 to 31 are in condition for allowance.

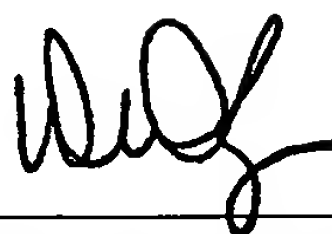
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Amendment A

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Allowance of claims 1 to 31 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

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